

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 071

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2013

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: RICARDO ZUNIGA'S VIEWS

1. POLOFF HAD CONVERSATION WITH RICARDO ZUNIGA AUGUSTINUS, LEADER OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY, ON MAY 16. ZUNIGA SAID THAT GENERAL LOPEZ IS PAYING VARIOUS JOURNALISTS AND COMMENTATORS TO DEFEND HIS ACTIONS AND CHARACTER. IN ADDITION, HE MENTIONED SOME LABOR AND COMPESINO LEADERS SUCH AS REYES RODRIGUEZ (PRESIDENT OF ANACH) AND VICTOR ARTILES (SECGEN OF CTH) WERE CALLING FOR LOPEZ' RETURN. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE LOPEZ WANTED TO BECOME CHIEF OF STATE AGAIN OR THAT HE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO RETURN BY THE LT. COLONELS EVEN IF HE WANTED TO DO SO. HE REMARKED THAT LOPEZ' REAL OBJECTIVE IS TO CREATE A CLIMATE SO THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO REMAIN IN HONDURAS AND EXERCISE INFLUENCE FROM "BEHIND THE THRONE."

2. ZUNIGA SAID THAT LOPEZ HAS VISITED MELGAR, PAZ AND SEVERAL BATTALION COMMANDERS IN THE PAST TEN DAYS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE LT. COLONELS' KNOW ABOUT LOPEZ' ACTIONS AND ARE ANGERED AT WHAT THEY SEE AS LOPEZ' ATTEMPT TO REINFORCE HIS OWN POSITION. ZUNIGA SAID THAT LOPEZ COULD CREATE A DIFFICULT SITUATION FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT IF HE PERSISTS IN HIS PRESENT ACTIVITIES.

3. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE REAL POWER RESTS IN THE HANDS OF THE LT. COLONELS AND THAT BASIC GOVERNMENT DECISIONS

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WILL BE MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THE GROUP IS ROUGHLY

DIVIDED INTO THREE SUB-GROUPS. HE OBSERVED THAT THESE SUB-GROUPS WERE NOT BASED UPON IDEOLOGICAL VIEWS BUT RATHER ON A DESIRE TO BE THE COMINANT ELEMENT IN THE LARGER GROUP. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE LT. COLONELS ARE NOT GUIDED BY ANY OVERALL IDEOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW AND THAT THEIR MAIN INTEREST IS IN POWER, THAT IS, CONTROL OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND, BY EXTENSION, THE GOVERNMENTAL APPARATUS. HE SAID THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS MAINLY COMPOSED OF COMPETENT INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE SELECTED FOR THEIR PROFESSIONAL, RATHER THAN POLITICAL, CAPACITIES.

4. ZUNIGA REMARKED THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS FACED WITH A CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION, AND SIAD THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES WOULD BE IN A VERY DIFFICULT POSITION IF THEY WER IN POWER AND HAD TO DEAL WITH THE CRISIS. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THE IMPORTANCE OF RESOLVING THE DISPUTE WITH EL SALVADOR AND SAID THAT THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS IN A BETTER POSITION TO SETTLE THE QUESTION THAN A GOVERNMENT IN THE HANDS OF A POLITICAL PARTY. HE COMMENTED THAT HE HOPED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE TO SETTLE THE SALVADOR DISPUTE AND EASE THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS. HE SAID THAT THE PARTIES WOULD NEED ABOUT TWO YEARS TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES TO RETURN TO POWER.

5. COMMENT: ZUNIGA APPEARS TO BELIEVE THAT THE LT. COLONELS' GROUP WILL EVENTUALLY CALL FOR FREE ELECTIONS AND A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY. HE ASSUMES THAT THE PRESENT UNWIELDLY STRUCTURE WILL LEAD TO CONSTANT STRUGGLE FOR POWER AMONG THE UPPER LEVEL MILITARY LEADERS WITH THE CONSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT OF DANGEROUS RIVALRIES. HE BELIEVES THAT THE MOST PROBABLE WAY OUT OF THAT SITUATION (SALIDA) WILL BE A RETURN TO GOVERNMENT BY POLITICAL PARTIES. SANCHEZ

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